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C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

20 September 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Soviet Pressure on the CENTO Countries: A Tentative Evaluation

1. In recent weeks the USSR has sharply increased its pressure on Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, the Middle Eastern members of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). In each case, the pressure has been related to Soviet publication of classified Baghdad Pact documents, presumably acquired as a result of the 1958 revolution in Iraq. In Turkey, the Soviets, disregarding objections from the Turkish Government, have insisted on making public documents which charge the alliance members with aggressive intentions.

2. The Soviet radio beamed at Iran has highlighted alleged Baghdad Pact plans for nuclear attacks on the USSR and an "atomic death zone" in Iran. Taking off from this, the Soviet Ambassador in Tehran and his associates have threatened to intervene under Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921, unless Iran

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leaves CENTO.* The Soviet press and radio have used a purported Baghdad Pact document proposing the partition of Afghanistan between Iran and Pakistan to exacerbate already tense relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and to threaten the latter with massive Soviet support for Afghanistan.

3. We believe that these threats should be considered primarily as part of a general Soviet policy of bluster and intimidation attending the Berlin crisis. The higher level of world tension resulting from the crisis enables Moscow to increase its pressure on a number of target countries without seeming to resort to special provocation. The purpose is partly to divert Western attention from Berlin, partly to deter the countries concerned from supporting the West on the Berlin issue, and partly to further long-range Soviet aims by undermining the morale and weakening the will to resist in these countries.

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* The Soviets have consistently asserted that certain provisions of the treaty, initially designed to enable the USSR to take action against any counterrevolutionary forces which might establish themselves in Iran, gave them the right to intervene against any "aggressive forces" in Iran.

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4. We do not believe, however, that intensified Soviet propaganda and subversive efforts against the CENTO countries portends an intention to open a "second front" in this area. We think that the Soviets wish to concentrate rather than disperse their efforts in the weeks immediately ahead, and that they do not want the West to consider that an ultimate, worldwide showdown is at hand. Moreover, we believe that the Soviets expect eventually to achieve most of their aims in these countries primarily as a consequence of internal revolution rather than through overt aggression.

5. Accordingly, we conclude that intensified Soviet pressure on the CENTO countries is ancillary to immediate Soviet strategy for Berlin. However, Soviet actions also serve standing objectives in the CENTO area. The Soviet Union has long chafed over what it regards as US efforts to develop military bases in this area and by now has probably given up hope that any of the present CENTO Governments can be cajoled into dropping their US ties. In the case of Turkey, protected by NATO and strongly anti-Russian by tradition, we doubt that the current pressure campaign is designed to do more than generally raise tension. However, Iran and Pakistan are more vulnerable.

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6. In the case of Iran, Khrushchev appears never to have forgiven the Shah for initiating and then breaking off negotiations for a nonaggression pact in 1959. While the Tudeh (Iranian Communist) Party has relatively little internal capability at the present time, Khrushchev has repeatedly emphasized the instability of the present Iranian Government and has made no secret of his expectations that it will fall of its own weight in the not too distant future. He is also aware of the possibilities for subversion offered by Iran's geographic proximity to the USSR and the presence there of discontented minorities, such as the Kurds and Azerbaijanis.

7. No such opportunities for subversion exist in regard to Pakistan. However, the tentative moves toward an improvement in Soviet-Pakistani relations (Soviet assistance in oil exploration and land desalinization) which took place earlier this year have been overshadowed by Ayub's visit to the US and his outspoken statements in favor of the Western position on Berlin. Pakistan's quarrel with Afghanistan is now at its most acute stage. With the Pakistanti-Afghan border closed and the prospect of fighting between the two countries increasing, the USSR will have a chance to make Afghanistan virtually completely dependent on it; if this

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fighting actually breaks out, much of Pakistan's Army and many of its resources could be tied down in futile guerrilla warfare.

8. In sum, we think that the USSR will probably prefer for the present to concentrate on the Berlin crisis and that it is not likely to seek to provoke another confrontation with the West over Iran or over the Pakistani-Afghan situation. In both cases, however, it will probably continue vigorously to fish in the existing troubled waters; and, should new developments take place in either case which could be utilized to Soviet advantage, the USSR would probably be prepared to take strong measures to exploit them.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

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SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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